



By Mary Sullivan

# Teardrop Tag Along

**When Kurt and Shannon Bowden travel in their MINI, they never shed a tear over the accommodations.**

**A**lthough a therapist by profession, Shannon Bowden had never heard of OCMD, or Obsessive Compulsive Mini Disorder before.

However, when Christmas morning 2007 arrived, and all she received from Santa were boxes and boxes of after-market chrome body parts for her newly acquired '04 MCS, she realized that her husband, Kurt, may need some counseling. It was probably the result of Kurt's obsession that led to the conclusion that they needed a teardrop trailer to tow behind their MINI... matching teardrop, of course. Kurt, a designer of custom homes, loves building things that are "just right."

"The curse of being a designer," says Kurt, "is that I feel the need to design and build everything. Going out to buy a piece of furniture for my office, for example, just isn't in the cards. I've always felt the need to design and build that perfect piece to fit the need."

After stopping in on an annual teardrop trailer gathering that takes place on the shores of Lake Shasta, in their hometown of Lakehead, California, Kurt was

convinced that he could design and build his own teardrop.

"I had lost my father a couple of years back and was still recovering from the loss. Dad had always wanted to build hot rods when I was a kid, but my interests were more focused on other things that seem to distract most teenage boys," he chuckles. "Looking back, I deeply regret never having taken the opportunity to learn from a father who was an incredibly talented tool and die maker, designer, and production manager. As a way of healing, as well as pushing myself to a new level of craftsmanship, I dedicated the trailer project to him."

After weeks in design, using his computer-assisted design software, he came up with the first "Mini Tears," a trailer from Mini Coopers.

"It had to be light, of course, but I also didn't want it to look like the tail was wagging the dog. It had to be small."

He also wanted the trailer to look like it belonged to the car, which meant using Mini Cooper design cues.

"When I look at the dash of my 'S,' I see round, retro-looking features," says Kurt. "The tires and wheels of the



Galley kitchen at the back of the trailer features a sink with running water, roomy work counter and tiered drawers to hold spices.

**MC2**

teardrop are cradled by a tight fitting circular fender.”

Teardrop trailers, which gained huge popularity in the late 1930s and early 1940s, have a very retro look on their own, but Kurt wanted to take it a step closer to the MINI. After posting a want ad on the Redwood Empire Mini Enthusiasts website for stock MINI wheels, he was led to Hands Dinse, the service manager for Neillo MINI of Sacramento.

”He just sent me four, 15-inch, five-spoke wheels and tires he had sitting in his garage,” Kurt says shaking his head, “and I’d never even met the man!”

The MINI wheels, along with the unique round door design with “winged” vinyl graphics were all it took.

”I originally wanted to do Chili Red sides with a white top and black fenders,” continued Kurt, “but once Shannon saw a mirror-polished trailer at the teardrop gathering, there was no more discussion on the subject.”

In the cabin, Kurt has created unique, indirect lighting effects to cast a subtle glow over the varnished alder interior that looks more like a yacht than a trailer. A pull-down mirror that is nestled between two wine cabinets makes an ideal surface for laptop or DVD player. The stowage area above holds enough clothing for a two or three-day trip.

”It’s amazingly comfortable, even with this big guy,” Shannon teases, smiling at Kurt. “We can watch a movie or read a book and enjoy a glass of wine after the rest of the campground has turned in for the night.”

## Big Surprise in Back

The big surprise comes when the rear hatch on the trailer is opened. A fully equipped galley, complete with a stainless steel sink with running water, and a 52-quart Coleman ice chest, brings car camping to a new level. The alder cabinets have the same glass-smooth finish as the cabin and provide plenty of storage for pots, pans, plates, and cutlery. The cabinet below stores the barbecue unit, butane stove, fuel, and water storage tank. Located at the center of the counter top cabinets are three, tiered drawers fitted with jars that hold cooking spices.

”People are always blown away when you pull out one of the drawers and find the flatware, cooking utensils and dish towels,” Kurt says.

”The galley design was pretty important,” says Shannon. “We talked with several “teardroppers” about their cabinet layouts and the response was always the same: “Design for your personal style of camping and cooking.”

So after making up a food and libation list for a typical camping trip, the galley began to take shape.

”It became apparent that we needed a bar and a way to keep the beer cold,” she laughed, “and I really liked the idea of having a working sink.”

The trailer is independently powered by its own 12-volt wheelchair battery, which is tucked away in the diamond-plate tongue box. A 110-volt battery charger is mounted inside the box, where a small tool box, pair of jack stands, and four, diamond-plate wheel chocks are kept, as well. The trailer can run all the lights for about 85 hours without the need to recharge the battery, but if 110-volt power is not available to use for recharging, a roll-up solar panel trickle-charger can be connected. Nothing is tied to the MINI’s electrical system except the taillights.

The 400-hour project was a labor of love for Kurt. The project was so enjoyable, that Kurt says he has started work



Teardrop shape is complemented by round doors and trimmed out with MINI-style wings and MINI wheels.

Flip-up back reveals a roomy galley, large cooler, and plenty of storage space.

Trailer interior hides a wine cabinet, closet, and a queen-sized mattress. Shannon and Kurt Bowden say that their trailer is cozy and comfortable.

on a second trailer that he plans to sell when it is finished. As you might expect, there has been a great deal of interest in the trailers, both from MINI owners, as well as other “little car” owners.

”I’m not interested in starting up a production trailer company,” says Kurt, “but, as in my design business, it is very gratifying to create something for a client who truly appreciates the work.” **MG**

### Specifications:

Gross Weight:	876 lbs.
Tongue Weight:	89 lbs.
Length:	8 ft., 6 in.
Width:	4 ft.
Chassis:	Tubular steel
Axle:	1500# - Torsion suspension
Bed Dimensions:	47 in. wide x 72 in. long
For more info:	<a href="mailto:minitears@shasta.com">minitears@shasta.com</a>

